



# ENLACES NEWS

Volume 1, March 2002

*A publication of the International Program of Heartland Alliance*

## **In This Edition:**

This first edition of Enlaces News gives Mexico-U.S. Advocates Network friends and supporters an overview of our evolving work. We have divided it into four sections, three of which report directly on areas of International Program work. The fourth section includes information and analysis on migration, human rights, and economic development issues in North and Central America.

I. **Enlaces Regionales Planning Meeting**.....p.2

II. **Regional Network of Civil Organizations on Migration**.....p.4

III. **Mexico-U.S. Advocates Network**..p.9

IV. **Coverage of Migration and Development Issues**

-Salvadoran

Emigration.....p.10

-Human Rights

Violations of Central American Migrants .p.11

-Unaccompanied

Immigrant Children in the U.S.....p.13

-Remittances as a Tool of Development.....p.14

-Free Trade in the Americas.....p.15

## **Dear Friends,**

As you know, the Mexico-U.S. Advocates Network was conceived in 1995 as a project dedicated to improving communication between Mexican and U.S. human and migrants' rights advocates about migration policy issues. However, almost from the start, friends and partners in the region urged us to transcend bi-national boundaries as we worked to strengthen cross-border civil society collaboration and advocacy. Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights staff, who have been responsible for the work of the Mexico-U.S. Advocates Network in the U.S., have provided leadership to the Regional Network of Civil Organizations on Migration (which includes representatives of civil society organizations from North and Central America, as well as the Dominican Republic) and have coordinated several Midwestern immigrant rights initiatives.

Currently, we are looking for ways to build upon the experience gained through years of engagement with binational and regional civil society networks to nurture a broader coalition that addresses fundamental issues of economic inequality in North and Central America. We see this initiative as a natural extension of our years of work with migrants' rights coalitions, given that dialogues with colleagues in migrant-sending countries have powerfully illuminated the international economic forces at the heart of the migration phenomenon. Heartland Alliance's International Program recently hired a new Associate Director, Amy Shannon, who will focus on developing this broad, cross-sector regional alliance. Amy comes to Heartland after working for five years as a non-profit consultant, with a focus on assisting NGOs and foundations with program design and project evaluation. She also worked as a program officer at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation with responsibilities for grantmaking and strategy on biodiversity conservation in Latin America and sustainable development policy.

As the transformation of Heartland Alliance's international work increasingly brings us beyond Mexico-U.S. bi-national boundaries, we have been considering a more appropriate name for our program that reflects our regional engagements and impact. We have decided to temporarily refer to ourselves as the International Program of Heartland Alliance, an "umbrella" name which encompasses our work with several regional civil society coalitions and a Chicago-based immigrant leadership initiative. We have also decided to call our newsletter *Enlaces News*. The word "Enlaces" means "links" in Spanish, and we hope that this publication will contribute to our program's fundamental goal: strengthening civil society connections in North and Central America. The purpose of this newsletter is to present an overview of the projects with which we are currently involved and to give our friends, partners, and colleagues an idea of the evolving – and exciting! – nature of our regional coalitional work.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us via the contact information listed on page 2. We appreciate your support of Heartland Alliance International Program work, and look forward to collaborating with you all in the future.

**Oscar Chacón, Amy Shannon, and Spring Miller – International Program Staff**

**Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights**

208 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 1818; Chicago, IL; 60604; Tel. (312) 660-1347;

Fax: (312) 660-1500

## ENLACES REGIONALES: BUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY CONNECTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE IN THE AMERICAS

*By Amy Shannon and Spring Miller*

The Heartland Alliance is building upon its experience with regional migrants' rights networks in order to develop a multi-issue regional civil society forum to address issues of economic inequalities and sustainable development in North and Central America. Discussions of the phenomenon of migration inevitably lead to discussions regarding a variety of other issues, including economic development, trade policy, social and economic rights, and sustainable use of natural resources. Through its work with migrant rights' advocates from throughout the region, Heartland Alliance International Program staff became increasingly aware of the need for communication and mutual education amongst civil society sectors working to address a variety of issues associated with socio-economic disparities in North and Central America. In laying the groundwork for the regional network *Enlaces Regionales*, the Heartland Alliance hopes to create a space where representatives of immigrants rights, sustainable development, and environmental communities can come together to explore the linkages between their interests and develop strategies for joint action.

Our goal is to make civil society voices more effective in the many different decision-making arenas where important choices are being made that will impact our future in the region. We know, for example, that migration patterns in the region impact labor flows and human rights. Local and national agricultural policies have enormous impacts on both rural economies and the cities to which rural people migrate. International investment agreements can determine access to credit, and impact labor and environmental practices of large companies. Regional trade agreements may change the shape of national economies over a very short time. However, narrow, sectoral analyses of these issues persist. Migration is viewed as a primarily domestic issue in the United States, divorced from the forces that push migrants from their homes in the first place. Rural issues rarely make it on the radar screen in international agreements, although rural people may well bear the brunt of economic globalization. U.S.-based Latino immigrant communities, whose experience in many ways encompasses the variety of inter-related forces outlined above, will play a key role in the development of this initiative.

### About Us

The Heartland Alliance is an anti-poverty, human rights organization that provides housing, health care and human services to improve the lives of impoverished Chicagoans. Once known as Travelers & Immigrants Aid, Heartland has been helping the most marginalized men, women and children through services and advocacy since 1888.

With support from the Ford Foundation, the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the General Service Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation, the International Program of Heartland Alliance works to promote human rights and a sustainable future in the North and Central American region by strengthening civil society networks across national borders.

### Contact Information

Oscar Chacón, Director [ochacon@mexicousadvocates.org](mailto:ochacon@mexicousadvocates.org) (312) 660-1343

Amy Shannon, Associate Director [ashannon@mexicousadvocates.org](mailto:ashannon@mexicousadvocates.org) (312) 660-1327

Spring Miller, Program Coordinator [spring@mexicousadvocates.org](mailto:spring@mexicousadvocates.org) (312) 660-1347

We plan to consult with potential partners and interested regional leaders over the next several months to develop and strengthen this concept so that it will be most useful to advocates throughout the region. As part of that process, we are planning an initial meeting, using the themes of Corn and Community, to examine a concrete expression of the inter-relatedness of our economies and our societies. That meeting will be held in June 2002.

On February 19, Heartland Alliance gathered a small group of leaders from the U.S., Mexico and Central America for a preliminary planning meeting to discuss the strategy for our *Enlaces* initiative. In spite of the fact that participants included representatives of diverse civil society sectors, they rapidly identified several areas of common interest and concern. These areas included:

1. Rural Poverty and Food Security
  - Implications of development strategies that abandon the countryside without offering meaningful alternatives for poor and displaced people.
2. Migration in its regional and global contexts.
  - Specifically raising awareness of the relationships among migration, poverty, globalization, economic development (free trade, etc) and public policies at national and regional levels.
3. The potential role of U.S. migrant communities from Mexico and Central America in shaping alternatives.
  - Alternative proposals for economic development (linked to discussions of economic power of remittances)
  - Need for increased capacity in immigrant organizations to take leadership on bi-national and regional issues
4. Critical importance of developing public policies at local national and regional levels that address these issues.
  - Create and strengthen linkages among local, national, bi-national and regional strategies
  - Free trade agreements are an urgent priority as these will constrain future options and are being negotiated now: Free Trade Area of the Americas, Free Trade Agreement between Central America and the United States.

Participants also identified several issues regarding the nature of the *Enlaces Regionales* process that would need to be discussed and fleshed out as the network takes shape. One key question involves the nature of the *Enlaces Regionales* space, and to what extent it will be a forum for exchanging information versus a platform from which advocacy campaigns can be coordinated and advanced. Heartland Alliance International Program staff will engage in a broad consultation with potential partners in Central America, Mexico, and the U.S. over the next several months. We look forward to the Corn and Community meeting as a launching point for the *Enlaces Regionales* network. Please see back page of this newsletter for more information about this meeting.

## **The Regional Network of Civil Society Organizations on Migration (RNCOM)**

*Heartland Alliance International Program staff coordinate U.S. engagement with the regional civil society network that meets parallel to the inter-governmental Regional Conference on Migration (RCM), which includes representatives of Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize, Mexico, Canada, the U.S., and the Dominican Republic. Each year the RCM convenes an annual meeting at the vice-ministerial level, interim technical meetings, and topical seminars. The RNCOM includes civil society representatives from every member country of the RCM, and works to promote the human and labor rights of migrants within the context of that regional intergovernmental forum. In its first years of existence, the RNCOM primarily responded from a human rights perspective to the governmental agenda of the RCM, but through a process of internal consolidation and consultation, it has evolved into a proactive coalition with an agenda of its own. The RNCOM is currently promoting the Regional Human Rights Initiative, the center of which is a campaign for the adoption by all RCM member countries of a set of Regional Guidelines for the Treatment of Migrants in Situations of Arrest, Detention, Deportation, and Reception.*

### **RNCOM MEMBERS MEET TO ADVANCE REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE**

In November 2001, members of the Regional Network of Civil Organizations on Migration (RNCOM) met in Antigua, Guatemala for a seminar entitled *Promoting Human Rights: Follow-up to the Projects of the Regional Network for Civil Organizations on Migration*, with the goal of advancing the RNCOM's Regional Guidelines for the Treatment of Migrants in Situations of Arrest, Detention, Deportation, and Reception (Guidelines) initiative. Participants shared advances made during 2001 in the Guidelines initiative, including: the implementation of monitoring projects in Mexico, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic; the publication of Guatemala and Honduras National Reports; and the development of the draft text of the Guidelines. They listened to presentations regarding how the Regional Guidelines document will fit into international and regional legal frameworks and outlined national and regional advocacy strategies to promote the adoption of the Guidelines. They also discussed changes to the immigration policy climate at national and regional levels after September 11.

#### **Expert Presentations**

On the first day of the seminar, participants heard presentations from international human rights law experts regarding the Regional Guidelines. Alicia Junco, director of the Law Clinic of the ITAM in Mexico City and consultant for Sin Fronteras, I.A.P., discussed the importance of identifying human

rights frequently violated in the region in order to help in the eventual implementation of the Regional Guidelines. Roxanna Atholtz of the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) presented an overview of the legal work in the Inter-American System related to migration. In recent years, the Inter-American System has considered cases including arbitrary detention; detention conditions; the right to education for migrants; the right to nationality; and deportation without due process. Finally, Helena Olea, Doctor of Juridical Science candidate at the University of Notre Dame, presented the context of the Regional Guidelines project. She explained that the Regional Guidelines are not new, but rather a compilation of important principles in the migration context that are contained in other instruments (whether the universal or regional system). In addition, the Regional Guidelines are not legally binding; their strength as a document will depend on the monitoring and advocacy follow-up efforts exerted by advocates throughout the region.

#### **Regional Panorama**

The objective of this section of the meeting was to evaluate the regional situation for migrants and migration policy and analyze how this current situation impacts the mission of the RNCOM to protect migrant rights. In particular, participants discussed the impact of the events of September 11

on migration policy in their countries. They identified the following trends in the region:

- Limitation of civil rights of migrants as well as nationals: this phenomenon has been noted throughout the region but particularly in the United States (use of Military Tribunals) and Canada (limits on due process guarantees).
- Change in the public perception of migrants: participants observed how official discourse has altered the image of migrants in a short time. Now, in addition to labeling migrants as “illegal”, “different/the other”, “criminals”, “drug and people traffickers”, migrants have been presented in the media as potential terrorists.
- Governments have utilized the attacks as a pretext to invest more resources in the continued militarization of the borders, increased control at ports of entry, and databases, as well as to justify accords that had been placed on hold. Examples include *Plan Sur* in Mexico, increased efforts to intercept migrants in Central America before they make it to Mexico and the United States, the regional standardization of procedures and documentation such as visa requirements, databases, etc.
- Increase in Regional and Bi-national Accords: examples include the Safe Third Country Agreement between Canada and the U.S., and the continued pressure for countries to enter into the Agreement for the Return of Extra-Regional Migrants with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- Economic Impact of Tightened Border Policies: limits on commerce flows, decreased revenue from tourism, limitations on skilled migrant worker visas, decrease in remittances, criminalization/limitation of the remittance process through increased restrictions on financial transfers, negative economic impact on countries of origin.
- Migration Legislation reforms that incorporate national security language: drafts of legislation in Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador contain similar provisions for the criminalization of migration and have used the national security argument to justify ample discretion. The draft legislation in Dominican Republic is an

exception and contains provisions to protect migrant human rights.

- The increase in migration control through bi-national and regional accords combined with the societal perception of migrants as a national security threat will limit access to protection systems for asylum and refugee applicants. This may lead to increased applications in Mexico and Central America as access to U.S. and Canadian processes is restricted.

### **Advocacy Strategies Towards Guidelines Adoption**

On the last day of the seminar, network members came together to plan region-wide and country-specific advocacy strategies for the adoption of the Guidelines by next March. During the RCM Annual Meeting in Guatemala in April 2002, RNOCM members will request that government members take the following actions:

1. Adopt the Regional Guidelines;
2. Incorporate a strategy for implementation of the Regional Guidelines in the Plan of Action; and
3. Facilitate access to government information and facilities to assist in the evaluation of the Regional Guideline implementation.

The editorial committee will revise the Guidelines based on comments received from network members, governmental representatives, and experts. The committee will produce a final version for the April VII RCM meeting. The Executive Committee of the RNCOM will approve the final version of the Guidelines and will send them to the RNCOM and governments. Additionally, all network members will ensure that their respective governments are appropriately engaged in the Guidelines development process.

*This article is based on a report of the RNCOM seminar written by Gretchen Kuhner and Spring Miller.*

## RNCOM PUBLISHES NATIONAL REPORTS WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF REGIONAL GUIDELINES INITIATIVE

*By Spring Miller*

As part of the Regional Human Rights Initiative, the Regional Network of Civil Organizations on Migration (RNCOM) is preparing a national report regarding migration policies and migration control practices in every member country of the Regional Conference on Migration. Each of these reports follows a common format in order to facilitate standardization and comparison of collected information. Each report addresses the characteristics of the emigrant, immigrant, and migrant population in each country, presents an overview of the legal framework governing migration, and describes country norms and practices related to the interception, detention, deportation, and reception of migrants.

The reports will provide evidence to demonstrate the urgent need for the Regional Guidelines for the Protection of the Human Rights of Migrants in situations of arrest, detention, deportation, and reception. They will also provide a tool for advocates looking to identify regional trends and to compare the impact of national-level migration policy changes.

Sin Fronteras, IAP, is editing, translation, and national reports. So far, Honduras National Report is set to be completed and published, the Guatemalan Migration (MENAMIG) Report; members of the Migration in Honduras the Honduras National

NGOs, including Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, the American Bar Association, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and Immigration and Refugee Services of America, contributed to the production of the U.S. report. Several of the issues of concern highlighted in these reports include:

- A lack of coherent Migration Law in Guatemala that firmly establishes that undocumented status is an administrative, not a criminal, violation.
- A lack of established process and timelines in Guatemala for dealing with extra-regional migrants, which results in inordinately long detention periods for these migrants;
- The impact of increased deportations of Hondurans from Mexico and the U.S., and the importance of the U.S. TPS program for the Honduran immigrant population;
- In Guatemala and Honduras, the need to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of Rights of all Migrant Workers and their Families;
- The 1996 U.S. immigration law which “unfairly targeted immigrants, deprived them of their due process rights, stripped asylum seekers of important safeguards, and mandated tremendous increases in the use of detention”;
- U.S. immigration law enforcement practices which contribute to rising numbers of deaths on the Mexico-U.S. border.

**The reports will provide evidence to demonstrate the urgent need for the Regional Guidelines for the Protection of the Human Rights of Migrants in situations of arrest, detention, deportation, and reception. They will also provide a tool for advocates looking to identify regional trends and to compare the impact of national-level migration policy changes.**

responsible for the publication of the the Guatemala and Reports have been and the U.S. National released within the next Roundtable on was responsible for the Guatemala National National Forum on (FONAMIH) produced Report, and several U.S.

*If you are interested in receiving a copy of any of these national reports, please contact us at [spring@mexicousadvocates.org](mailto:spring@mexicousadvocates.org) or communicate directly with Sin Fronteras at [sflegal@laneta.apc.org](mailto:sflegal@laneta.apc.org).*

## GOVERNMENTAL REPRESENTATIVES MEET TO DISCUSS MIGRATION AND BORDER POLICY ISSUES AT RCM SEMINAR

*By Cesar Torres*

From January 16<sup>th</sup> through January 18<sup>th</sup>, representatives of the member governments of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) met for a seminar entitled "Modernization of Migration Management and Border Cooperation." Regional Network of Civil Organizations on Migration (RNCOM) also participated in the RCM-sponsored seminar, which took place in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Javier Sanchez, member of the executive committee of the RNCOM, gave a presentation to seminar participants regarding "a vision of modernization of the management of migration in Central America, from the perspective of civil society." He stressed the importance of the regularization of migratory flows and pointed out that migration is a tool for the development of societies, given the economic, social, and cultural contributions that migrants make to sending and receiving countries. Additionally, he expressed the concerns many civil society representatives have regarding initiatives for changing migration legislation in the countries of the region. Many of these legislative proposals are being made with little or no consultation with civil society, and are formulated based on very restrictive concepts of migration. These legislative changes are being pursued in spite of the fact that a number of countries do not yet have a clear, comprehensive migratory policy that addresses the relationship between migration and poverty.

RCM governmental representatives reached several conclusions over the course of the seminar. They recognized the importance of making the domestic and foreign dimensions of migration laws in a given country more consistent, and the need to establish a comprehensive national sets of legislation on the issue. They emphasized the importance of updating migration policies in the member countries of the RCM, in order to ensure that they reflect the migratory reality of the

region. In this respect, they recognized the benefits of participation of civil society and urged civil society to become more involved in the processes of formulating migration policy.

Seminar participants recognized the value of programs to regularize temporary migrant workers and undocumented residents, in order to facilitate orderly migration, just as they recognized the importance of boosting bilateral and multilateral mechanisms that lead to the establishment of programs which allow migrants to return in a dignified, safe, and orderly manner to their countries of origin.

With regard to border cooperation, RCM representatives recognized the need to address border development to bring about comprehensive development in border regions, particularly in the areas of education, health, environment, and infrastructure. They also agreed to nurture binational border development projects with international cooperation oriented towards, among other things, the development and strengthening of economic and commercial activities in the zone.

These were some of the conclusions that will be brought to the consideration of the RCM at its next meeting, which will take place in Guatemala in April 2002. Some of them may become concrete recommendations to be presented to the RCM. The seminar, on the whole, took place in an environment of respect, with the full participation of the members of the governmental delegations and civil society, demonstrating, once again, the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration.

*Cesar Torres works with Jesuit Refugee Services in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. This article first appeared in the February 2002 edition of Entre Redes, a publication of Sin Fronteras, IAP. This article was translated by Spring Miller.*

## **The Mexico-U.S. Advocates Network**

*Although Heartland Alliance staff have become increasingly involved in other regional and local initiatives, the Mexico-U.S. Advocates Network, which aims to facilitate communication and mutual education between Mexico and U.S. human and migrants' rights advocates, and to develop vehicles for joint advocacy on migration policy, remains a central International Program project. In January of 2002, Heartland Alliance International Program staff led U.S. religious leaders and faith-based immigrants rights advocates on a delegation to Mexico to deepen their understanding of the structural forces generating undocumented migration flows from Mexico towards the U.S. and to facilitate the development of linkages between this ecumenical group and their Mexican religious colleagues.*

### **RELIGIOUS LEADERS DELEGATION TO MEXICO**

*By Spring Miller*

In late 2000, members of the Mexico-U.S. Advocates Network identified the religious and labor communities as two civil society sectors with which it hoped to collaborate more closely in its binational advocacy work. With support from the Ford Foundation, Mexico-U.S. Advocates staff began the process of planning a delegation to Mexico for national leaders in each of these two communities.

In preparation for the Religious Leaders' Delegation, Heartland Alliance staff turned to the already-established forum of the U.S. Church Consultation on Migration as a base for its delegation participant list. This U.S. Church Consultation, composed of U.S. participants in the broader North American Consultation of Churches, met in May 2001 to discuss how national church bodies and faith-based organizations could take collective action regarding migration and migration policy concerns. At that meeting, Heartland Alliance staff presented the idea for the religious delegation to Consultation participants as an opportunity for education about the root causes of Mexico-U.S. migration and as chance to initiate a dialogue with Mexican religious colleagues about potential binational advocacy on policy issues.

On January 30, 2002, U.S. participants gathered in Mexico City to begin their delegation. Over the next three days, they met with their Mexican counterparts, listened to presentations of experts on various aspects of the Mexico-U.S. migration relationship, visited a migrant-sending community in the state of Puebla, and engaged one another in conversations about how the religious community

could most effectively uphold its spiritual mandate to stand with the sojourner in the context of Mexico-U.S. migration policy debates.

#### **Expert Presentations**

On the morning of January 31<sup>st</sup>, participants gathered to listen to a panel of experts discuss the state of human rights and migration policy in Mexico. The panel included Manuel Canto Choc, president of the Citizens Movement for Democracy; Jeff Hermanson, representative of the AFL-CIO Center for Labor Solidarity in Mexico; Rodolfo Garcia Zamora, professor at the Universidad de Zacatecas, and Gretchen Kuhner, director of the refugee and asylum program at Sin Fronteras, IAP. Speakers focused on the slow process of democratization in Mexico; on violations of Mexicans' economic, social, and labor rights; on the connections between these rights violations and emigration; and on the lack of a comprehensive national policy to deal with the complex migration phenomenon in Mexico.

#### **Mexican Religious Leaders Presentations**

In the afternoon of January 31<sup>st</sup>, U.S. participants gathered with Mexican colleagues to listen to presentations on examples of ministry in action. Mexican religious leaders spoke about their work in the areas of human rights and migration, providing delegation participants with further analysis of the socio-political reality and migration phenomenon in Mexico, and offering their own reflections on the theological basis of their work.

The speakers were Edgar Cortez from the Jesuit-based Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (PRODH); Padre Vladimiro Valdes, a Jesuit priest completing his thesis on migration from Central America to Mexico; El Padre Flor Maria Rigoni, a Scalibrini priest who runs a Casa del Migrante (Migrant Shelter) in Tapachula, Chiapas; and Pastor Eduardo Carrillo, a Methodist minister who coordinates the work of the Mexican Methodist Committee on Migration.

### Trip to Puebla

On Friday, February 1, delegation participants traveled to the town of Coyula in the municipality of Atlixco, Puebla. The visit was coordinated by Marcela Ibarra, coordinator of the Migration Program, an innovative community-university partnership based at the Ibero-American University in Puebla. The Migration Program conducts research on several towns in the state experiencing high levels of emigration and coordinates capacity-building trainings intended to promote community-based development in those towns.

Upon arrival, delegation participants went on a tour of Coyula, visiting the town church, a community medical center, the home of a family with significant migratory experience in the U.S., and a secondary school. Through conversations with the community members who had migrated to the U.S. and with the children in the school – nearly all of whom had family members in the New York City and northern New Jersey area – participants were exposed to the human dimension of the phenomenon they had explored at an intellectual level the day before.

After returning from the trip to Puebla, delegation participants gathered over dinner to discuss and process the day's experiences. Delegates noted that the visit, along with the presentations they heard the day before, had made them aware of the global dimension of the issue of migration, and had pressed upon them a need to consider that dimension in their own advocacy work on the immigration policy in the U.S. Several suggested that shifting from the use of the term "immigration" to the term "migration" would reflect their increasingly international understanding of what has been dealt with in the

U.S. largely as a domestic phenomenon. They spoke of the need to communicate and collaborate with the international economic development branches or divisions of their respective faith-based organizations, and ultimately, to address the global economic inequalities which are at the heart of migration flows.

**Delegates noted that the visit...had made them aware of the global dimension of migration, and had pressed upon them a need to consider that dimension in their own advocacy work.**

Participants also discussed the U.S. church/ faith community response to the phenomenon of undocumented Mexico-U.S. migration. The issue, they noted, resonates closely with the theological principles – central to many faith

traditions – to welcome the stranger and provide shelter to the sojourner. Observing that the issue of migration is generally dealt with in the U.S. from legal and political perspectives, several participants suggested that it is the responsibility of the church community to articulate a common voice speaking to the moral ramifications of migration control policies.

### Concluding Discussion

On Saturday, February 2, the final day of the delegation, participants met again with several Mexican counterparts to develop strategies for future joint action. Despite the high levels of individual commitment to further joint work and action expressed by Mexican and U.S. participants, there was significant discussion of the obstacles that must be overcome before that future collaborative action within and between faith communities in both countries is realized.

Drawing from several of the common areas of concern articulated at the June 2001 meeting of the Church Consultation on Migration and in conference calls preceding the Mexico delegation, participants listed the following as priorities for their coordinated policy advocacy work:

- 1.) to advocate for a just and safe U.S. border policy;
- 2.) to enable/empower migrants in the U.S. by providing them with essential services;
- 3.) to advocate for the legalization of undocumented migrants in the U.S.;

- 4.) to push fair and functional immigration policies that benefit migrant sending and receiving countries;
- 5.) to address migration as an international phenomenon; and
- 6.) to reconcile the fields of migration and international economic development.

On a broader level, participants spoke of the need to develop a new ecumenical message that responds to the new globalized and transnational context in which we live. They spoke of the need to develop the capacity of churches in sending countries in order to be able to question and offer alternatives to the issue of extreme structural poverty.

Providing that it has the resources to do so, Heartland Alliance's International Program will

work to continue to facilitate communication and mutual education between Mexican and U.S. religious communities concerned with binational migration issues. It will also be important for representatives and leaders of those communities to forge new mechanisms for bilateral engagement and action among themselves. Meeting participants developed the following ideas for future coordinated action:

- Follow-up meeting in Mexico or the U.S.;
- Revival of North American Consultation of Churches;
- Development of a U.S.-Mexico ecumenical working group on migration; and
- Production of a joint analysis of binational migration.

---

## SALVADORANS FLEE FROM THE "COUNTRY OF OPPORTUNITIES"

*By Rolando Mata*

January 16, 2002 marked the ten-year anniversary of the peace agreements in El Salvador. El Salvador today is going through a very different situation than the one before and during the armed conflict. But the migratory flow of the 1980s continues. There is increasing desperation in El Salvador that compels citizens to look for hope for their future outside of the country.

It is true that El Salvador, after the Peace agreements, has enjoyed a political opening in which one doesn't face persecution and death for being considered a member of the opposition. The country is also enjoying a macroeconomic stability praised by the multilateral banks, and a process of modernization (privatization) of State services is underway. The process of opening the free market continues; the two earthquakes of January and February of 2001 did not shake that process from its course. The official line is that the structural transformations underway will make El Salvador a nation of the future and will generate opportunities for foreign investment.

But opportunities for improvement are not accessible to the average citizen. The life conditions of the common citizen are precarious. It seems that there are two classes of Salvadorans: the privileged and the common people. The wealthiest 20% of the nation's population receive 56% of the country's income, and the "common people" (more than 50% of the population) live in various levels of poverty.

In 2002, more than 7,000 state employees were added to the ranks of the unemployed and the number of informal "sojourners" of survival is growing. The decline in agricultural production after the earthquakes and the difficulties of coffee cultivation due to drops in international prices, combined with corruption, the high cost of living, and delinquency, result in a system of life in the country that is not functioning for Salvadorans. They are being pushed from the country, even at the expense of their few belongings and their lives themselves.

There have been dramatic stories published in national papers of more than 600 Salvadorans who emigrated in November and December 2001 to Sweden with the hope of being accepted as refugees. They sold their houses, their belongings; some even left their jobs. They are young people, professionals in various fields, from the city and from middle sectors. The former mayor of the town of Mejicanos, in the state of San Salvador, and his family

were part of this emigration avalanche towards Sweden. Today they are waiting to be deported. They will return to their country disheartened, some with debts, to reinitiate their lives with uncertainty and without any reception program.

The same situation is repeated with hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans destined for the U.S. and Canada. They sell or pawn their goods to pay the approximately \$3,000 that the “coyote” demands with the hope of arriving at their destination. They have the illusion of finding work, because “there is more hope over there,” and they take the risks associated with life as an undocumented migrant.

Statistics regarding emigration indicate that more than 6,000 Salvadorans have died in the last decade on the road towards the U.S. in an attempt to find work. However, these statistics hide the hidden drama. On January 13, 2002, Guatemalan authorities reported the rescue of a woman who survived a shipwreck that occurred on the border with Tecun Uman. Of the fifteen people who were on the ship (thirteen of whom were Salvadorans), only one survivor and four bodies were recovered.

One fourth of Salvadorans now live abroad and the numbers keep rising. It seems that the migration policies of the Salvadoran government privilege the capture and growth of family remittances. Through December of 2001, 1.9 billion dollars in family remittances had entered El Salvador, a quantity that represents 13.7% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Remittances have become one of the principal means of alleviating the economic crisis in the country.

However, the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Relations are laudable, in that it has put the issue of human rights of migrants on the agenda of the Regional Conference on Migration. Additionally, it has unleashed a strong campaign to put pressure on the U.S government to renew Temporary Protected Status for Salvadorans, and in support of the initiatives to modify the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) to give the same treatment to Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Hondurans that was given to Cubans and Nicaraguans in the process of applying for legal permanent residence. In spite of this, there are no indications that these humanitarian actions will frame a coherent policy that focuses on the flows and counter-flows of the migration phenomenon.

*Rolando Mata is the Director of the FUNSALPRODESE in San Salvador, El Salvador. This article was translated by Spring Miller.*

## FOLLOWING UP ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND SITUATIONS OF RISK IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRANT POPULATION

*By Carol Girón*

At its VI meeting in March 2001, the Regional Network of Civil Organizations on Migration (RNCOM) approved a proposal submitted by the Guatemala branch of the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) to research human rights monitoring mechanisms in the region as part of the Regional Guidelines initiative. The study is currently being carried out in several of the member countries of the RNCOM.

Staff of FLACSO-Guatemala’s Migration Program are coordinating this study, which is called “Follow-

up on Human Rights Violations and Situations of Risk in the Migrant Population in Central America.” The principal objective of the project is to identify and categorize the principal violations of the human rights of migrants in Central America and the situations of risk in which this population lives. Obtaining and organizing this information will allow researchers to identify the principal actors who violate the human rights of migrants. Because the study is being carried out through all parts of the region, researchers have developed a questionnaire with a single format. They have also developed a

database that allows for the standardization of information collected related to the violation of the human rights of migrants. Another specific objective of this project is the creation of a database of geographically-referenced information regarding risks in the migratory routes throughout Central America.

Between November 22 and 27, 2001, FLACSO hosted the first seminar-workshop training geared towards researchers in the region. The Migration Tables and Forums in Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic supported this seminar as well. Each of these countries designated a representative knowledgeable about migration issues and capable of conducting fieldwork to participate in the seminar.

**The principal objective of the project is to identify and categorize the principal violations of the human rights of migrants in Central America and the situations of risk in which this population lives.**

The objectives of the workshop-seminar included:

- Strengthening the institutional capacity of organizations in the Central American region to enable them to carry out monitoring activities and follow-up to the violation of human rights of migrants and the situations of risk in which the migrant population lives.
- Training Central American and Caribbean researchers in the design and creation of databases in order to address human rights violations and situations of risk in which the migrant population lives.
- Training the researchers in the use of basic concepts regarding human rights violations and the risks related to migration.
- Initiating a process for the creation of standardized, region-wide monitoring and follow-up procedures regarding human rights violations and situations of risk of the migrant population.

During the first seminar-workshop participants listened to a series of presentations designed to introduce them to the conceptual framework of

research. Also, participants reviewed the instrument (questionnaire) they will be using in their fieldwork. They received training in the use and management of databases, which will allow for the integration of the information that is obtained throughout the monitoring process.

The instrument that will be used for the collection of information will be the same in all countries and can be used on borders, in migrant shelters, and detention centers. The fieldwork for this project will be carried out between January and March 2002.

The goal is for each researcher to develop a preliminary report based on the results he or she obtained during the fieldwork stage. Based on the reports, and the tabulation of the database, a final comprehensive regional report will be developed and presented at the VII meeting of the

RROCM in April 2002.

The expected results include:

- Strengthened national projects and initiatives related to the development of coordinated systems of tracking and improved monitoring of human rights violations and situations of risks in migrant populations.
- Documentation of the violations that are occurring in the region and production of a map that allows researchers and advocates to identify the principal routes of risk for migrants.
- Contribution to the RROCM Regional Guidelines initiative as one of the first implemented monitoring efforts.
- A publication of final results, which will serve as a resource for making policies and programs intended to benefit the migrant population and their families.

*Carol Girón works with the Migration Program of the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) in Guatemala, Guatemala. This article first appeared in the February 2002 edition of Entre Redes, a publication of Sin Fronteras, IAP. It was translated by Spring Miller.*

# AT THE CROSSROADS: CARE AND PROTECTION FOR UNACCOMPANIED IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

*By Felecia Bartow*

Each year, approximately 5,000 immigrant children arrive in the U.S. unaccompanied by a parent or other guardian. A hidden but highly vulnerable population, these children are frequently fleeing abuse, neglect, or severe persecution in their home countries, including age-specific human rights abuses such as forced recruitment of child soldiers, child labor, forced child marriages, female genital mutilation, sexual servitude, and slavery. The horror of these children's situation is only compounded when the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) discovers them in the U.S., apprehends them, and transfers them to a detention facility to await an uncertain fate.

Once the INS apprehends these children, it becomes both their caretaker *and* their prosecutor, responsible for trying to act in the children's best interest while actively disproving their claims for asylum or other forms of immigration relief. This conflict is exacerbated by the fact that many of these children lack legal representation in their immigration proceedings<sup>1</sup>, are young in age, are not proficient in English, and are psychologically vulnerable due to abuse or neglect. After an in-depth home study process, some of these children are released to relatives in the U.S, a scant few are placed in foster care, while most languish in INS shelters or juvenile detention facilities around the country.

Unaccompanied immigrant children held by the INS in Chicago benefit from having a model shelter care facility run by Heartland Alliance. Children housed in INS-contracted detention facilities in other parts of the country are often subject to shackling and handcuffing, are forced to wear institutional uniforms (which make them indistinguishable from juvenile offenders), and are denied education in their native language, translation services, regular access to the outdoors, and faith-specific religious services<sup>2</sup>. These experiences only serve to magnify the trauma many of these children have experienced in their home countries before fleeing to the U.S. seeking protection from abuse, neglect, abandonment, or persecution.

In an effort to remedy a system that is not designed to adequately protect these children, Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) have introduced the Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act of 2001 (S. 121/H.R. 1904). While some modifications are still necessary to refine the bill, this critical piece of bipartisan legislation would make significant strides towards remedying the problems that plague the current system. S. 121/H.R. 1904 would transfer responsibility for the care and custody of these children from the INS to an Office of Children's Services staffed by experts in child welfare, and ensure the appointment of guardians and legal counsel for every child, among other necessary reforms. This bill would not, however, expand any substantive law provisions, including asylum or other forms of immigration relief.

At a Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration hearing held in early March on this issue, senators on both sides of the aisle noted that plans for administrative restructuring within the INS would not be sufficient to resolve existing problems stemming from the INS' role as both caretaker and prosecutor of unaccompanied immigrant children. Witnesses for the INS and the Immigration Court acknowledged that it would be beneficial for each child to have access to a guardian and legal counsel, but to do so the law must be changed. There is a growing number of bipartisan House and Senate co-sponsors of this important legislation, but more support is needed to provide greater protection for these children through legislative means. Any delay in enacting these critical reforms will only result in more children facing continued detention and deportation without access to legal representation or a guardian to protect their best interests.

*Felecia Bartow is the Program Coordinator for the Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center, a program of the Heartland Alliance.*

---

<sup>1</sup> In one particularly alarming example, national advocates reported that INS officials brought an 18-month-old toddler before a judge at an immigration hearing without legal representation or another adult advocate present.

<sup>2</sup> Information compiled by the Women's Commission on Refugee Women & Children.

## INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK HOSTS ROUNDTABLES ON REMITTANCES AND DEVELOPMENT

*By Oscar Chacón*

During the month of February, the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) convened a series of roundtables discussions entitled "Remittances as an Instrument of Development in Central America and the Caribbean." Emigrants from Central America and the Caribbean sent an estimated \$20 billion to their countries of origin in 2000. Remittances make up 10% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in six countries of the region. The aim of the IADB-sponsored roundtables was to explore three issues of concern: first, how to reduce the cost of the transfer of remittances; second, how to continue to improve ease and access to remittance transfers; and third, how to mobilize and channel immigrants' savings through greater involvement of formal financial institutions in the process.

The third and final of these roundtables on Remittances as an Instrument of Development was held in Washington, DC on February 25. In spite of the broad scope implied by its title, the conference centered on the more technical issues of scrutinizing systems of collecting, transmitting, and delivering remittances, and on how to make those systems increasingly more cheap and effective for users.

Unfortunately, there was very little discussion of the economic policies that continue to push millions of people to emigrate from their countries of origin. Almost all of the presentations given at the conference revolved around the increasing total amount of remittances that are sent to Latin America and the Caribbean, which reached over \$23 billion last year, according to central banks in the region. The only presenter that spoke about the current situation in the rural sector was Francisco Castro, representative of the United Community of Chinameca. Castro focused on the reality of the few

farmers who remain in Chinameca, his town of origin.

The focus of this conference seemed to confirm a statement made several weeks ago by a Mexican Jesuit priest who has worked extensively with migrant communities from Mexico and Central America. This priest said that during the last several years a consensus has been emerging among multilateral financial institutions, regarding transferring responsibility for eliminating extreme poverty in major countries of origin to the immigrant communities from those countries that live and work in developed nations, without scrutinizing the structural economic policies dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and banked by the World Bank and regional banks like the IADB. Additionally, the obedient role that national governments play in the execution of these policies was not questioned during the seminar.

**Remittances in and of themselves, even if they increase in the coming years, will not be enough to alleviate the conditions of poverty and total loss of hope that ... result in the rising levels of migration towards the U.S.**

Undoubtedly, immigrants now living in the U.S. should develop the capacity to question the current structural adjustment policies that continue to have negative effects for the majority of people in countries of origin. Immigrant communities also need to develop the capacity to propose realistic and responsible alternatives that would allow their compatriots in countries of origin to overcome the persistent conditions of poverty in which they now live. Remittances in and of themselves, even if they increase in the coming years, will not be enough to alleviate the conditions of poverty and total loss of hope that once combined with the overwhelming and constant appeals about all the goods that await immigrants in the land of milk and honey, result in the rising levels of migration towards the U.S.

Even if one allows that the exportation of workers will be part of the economic reality of sending countries for many years to come, there are

unacceptable conditions of human development in sending countries that perpetually condemn emigrant workers to jobs with the worst pay and worst labor conditions in general. Even if it is accepted that the exportation of manual labor is an inescapable reality, there should be a national and regional policy in the case of Central America that ensures that workers from those countries are increasingly skilled and increasingly conscious of their rights as international workers. However, in the current reality, we are very far from that type of situation.

Apart from the already-mentioned void in terms of discussions of the root economic causes of

migration, the conference made very clear the lack of widespread basic financial education in Latin American immigrant communities. The lack of knowledge of the most elemental financial tools on the part of the majority of the Latin American immigrant population continues to be the principal cause of the abuses committed against this population. Another issue that this conference illustrated is the urgent need to educate the leadership in immigrant community organizations, and the immigrant community in general, about the economic policies currently in effect in sending countries, including the need to know more about those who develop and implement these policies.

---

## FREE TRADE IN THE AMERICAS: FACING A CONTESTED FUTURE?

*By Spring Miller*

After the civil wars, dictatorships, and political tumult that characterized many Latin American countries throughout the 1980s, the 1990s were supposed to hail the restoration of democracy and an era of increased economic prosperity in the region. Urged on by the United States, most countries throughout the Western Hemisphere adopted free-market reforms during the 1990s, privatizing not only state-run industries but a number of public services as well, lowering import tariffs, and cutting domestic spending to align their federal budgets with the requirements set forth by multilateral lending agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In spite of the promises of greater prosperity, however, many ordinary people throughout the region have yet to see the benefits of a decade of these reforms. The case of Mexico, which entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the U.S. and Canada in 1994, illuminates a number of the social and environmental costs of the process of economic "modernization." In the face of cheap imports from the heavily-subsidized U.S. agricultural sector, small corn and sugar farmers in Mexico are increasingly unable to sustain themselves and their families. Without a national infrastructure or comprehensive policy mechanisms designed to soften the blows of

the jolting nature of Mexico's insertion into international economic markets, many rural Mexicans are simply being displaced, either to urban areas or the U.S.

The ascendance of George W. Bush to the U.S. presidency in January 2001 appeared to portend at least four more years of increased economic integration throughout the Western Hemisphere. Bush came to office promising to focus on deepening U.S. relations with Latin American countries and predicting that the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be "the Century of the Americas." The most concrete expression of this rhetoric was his plan to negotiate a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by 2005 that would eliminate trade barriers among every country in the Western Hemisphere except Cuba.

For the first several months of his term, the Bush administration seemed to be efficiently advancing the hemispheric free trade agenda. In April 2001 at the Summit of the Americas, leaders of thirty four nations in the Western Hemisphere endorsed the concept of the FTAA. In November 2001, the U.S. House of Representatives passed "fast track" legislation that would give the Bush Administration broad powers to negotiate trade agreements such as the FTAA.

Events in recent months have complicated what had appeared to be a hemispheric consensus among governments towards the implementation of a NAFTA-style free market system throughout the Americas. The September 11 terrorist attacks absorbed the attention of U.S. policymakers and relegated Western Hemisphere affairs to a lower priority on the national foreign policy agenda. The collapse of the Argentinean economy after a decade of following IMF reforms has made governments throughout Latin America wary of the free-market model championed by the Bush administration and embodied by the FTAA. Civil society organizations

and some policymakers throughout the hemisphere are increasingly engaged in exploring models of regional economic integration which are subject to democratic accountability

mechanisms and which address issues of social welfare, environmental sustainability, and reduction of economic inequalities. Alternative venues such as the recent World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, have offered opportunities to articulate and debate these new ideas.

In the midst of this growing regional dialogue on alternative approaches to trade and development issues, the Bush administration has announced it will seek to negotiate a free-trade deal in the spirit of NAFTA with the Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. This announcement, which came in mid-January, has generated tremendous interest in the Central American nations involved, whose combined GDP amounts to the seventh largest economy in Latin America. President Bush is expected to elaborate on this concept when he visits El Salvador on March 24.

The Central American governments have proposed to negotiate as a block with the U.S. During a February 18 meeting in Managua, the trade ministers of these five Central American nations developed an agenda for the negotiations and discussed technical issues such as the legislation governing trade issues in each country. They agreed that they would

attempt to use the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) negotiations to increase micro-regional integration on the isthmus itself, and that they would work on integrating their customs systems and resolving political and geographical disputes that have persisted in the region over the years.

Some Central American farmers have already expressed their concern about the potential impact of such a free trade agreement on the agricultural sector in the region, which has suffered in recent years due to governmental policies emphasizing industrial development and export crops. If there are no safeguards to protect Central American farmers from heavily-subsidized U.S. exports of goods like corn, meat and dairy products, the effects on the economies and societies of those countries could be devastating. Twenty three percent of Guatemala's GDP, 14.9% of Honduras' GDP, and 32% of Nicaragua's GDP come from the agricultural sector.

**Some Central American farmers have already expressed their concern about the potential impact of such a free trade agreement on the agricultural sector in the region.**

As Central American governments scramble to prepare themselves for trade negotiations with the U.S. government, which are expected to conclude with the announcement of a CAFTA as early as the first half of next year, civil society advocates should also be drawing on ongoing hemispheric discussions about alternative trade models, identifying areas of particular concern, and strategizing around how to impact the negotiations process. There are a number of lessons that can be drawn from the case of NAFTA with regard to the impact of free trade agreements on a variety of socio-economic issues, including migration, rural economic development, and environmental protection. It is crucial that civil society representatives from Central America and the U.S. enter into discussions now regarding the potential repercussions of such a CAFTA for people and the environment in both Central America and the U.S., and that they continue to engage one another in longer-term dialogues regarding sustainable alternatives to the U.S. version of market-based development that has been heralded as the only path to progress in the western hemisphere.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE HAITIAN/DOMINICAN BORDER

*By Cesar Torres*

The current economic and political situation in Haiti, along with the loss of hope for meaningful structural change in that country, is forcing many Haitians to look for solutions for themselves and their families on the other side of the Dominican border. These people, who are trying to better their own life conditions, are migrating in spite of physical, legal, and military barriers at the border. They are not inhibited by the fact that a lack of documentation equals illegality, or by the fact that in the Dominican Republic they are marginalized, persecuted, and exploited, for being poor and foreign and being people of color – simply for being Haitian.

The discriminatory, xenophobic factors that accompany anti-Haitian prejudices and the irregularity of many migrants' legal status are the root causes of the major human rights violations that migrants in the Dominican Republic suffer. Haitian immigrants live with a fear of being discovered, detained, repatriated, or deported, and they often become victims of chance and extortion. The high level of irregularity in the Haitian-Dominican migration flow lends itself to migrant-trafficking, with the aim of obtaining cheap manual labor for work in sugar cane plantations or in the construction industry. This situation is being used by the government to develop a political strategy to try to contain migration flows by criminalizing migration irregularity. This strategy has permitted the government to establish highly repressive mechanisms of control, like guarding the border with soldiers and establishing close collaboration between migration offices and the armed forces in raids and in prosecutions of migrants.

These realities challenge civil society to address the structural aspects of migration and to push for policies and practices that protect human rights. Haitian and Dominican civil society organizations have sought to generate spaces through which a response to this situation can be developed. One of these spaces is the binational network Jannot Succes, which has focused particularly on the deployment of troops in the northern zone of the Dominican-Haitian border. Through monitoring, the collection of information and the denouncement of violations, the Jannot Succes network is trying to influence administrative, military, police, and judicial action, so that these actions reflect the law and basic principles of human rights. The network seeks state and civil actions that fit within the reasonable limits of a social and democratic nation of laws. The activities of this network respond to three fundamental problems faced by those who live on the border:

**Repatriation:** The processes of repatriation are carried out arbitrarily and are often undertaken en masse. Military officers arrest migrants without any legal basis to do so. Based on the color of a person's skin and his or her way of talking, the military detains people and transports them to the border, without allowing them to take any steps in their own defense. There is no judicial or administrative process. Officials do not give migrants any information or motive for their repatriation before leaving migrants on the Haitian side of the border. Migrants are sent to Haiti without Dominican officials having sent a list of those being repatriated to the Haitian consulate and without having confirmed their nationality, resulting in many cases of Dominicans who are deported to Haiti. Additionally, on the Haitian side there is no entity that receives the repatriated migrants.

**Migrant trafficking:** Networks dedicated to the trafficking of migrants operate in the border zone. These networks are made up of Haitian and Dominican nationals, and in some cases their members have contacts with staff who work in governmental offices. They bring migrants through zones where there is no migration control, or use forged passports, or they get visas without showing all the required documents, etc. Many of these people are taken to sugarcane plantations to work on the sugar harvest, and the conditions there are inhumane; others are simply transported to Santiago or Santo Domingo, a "favor" for which traffickers are paid 600 to 1,000 Dominican pesos (35 to 60 U.S. dollars).

**Extortion:** Military, police, customs, and sometimes civilian personnel are involved in significant abuse of authority and charging migrants illegally. The authorities commit all kinds of abuse and extortion at border markets. They threaten Haitian vendors who sell their products on the Dominican side of the border with taking away their vendors' licenses if they aren't paid bribes.

The monitoring work carried out by members of the Jeannot Succes network on the northern border is a civil society response to the abuse and mistreatment of people, and reveals the fact that organized civil society is capable of becoming one of the key actors in the process of promoting and defending human rights. This network does not attempt to supplant the functions of state or government institutions; on the contrary, it aims to strengthen democracy and respect for human beings and the basic principles of a democratic nation of laws.

**Enlaces Regionales: Corn and Community Meeting**

**June 17-18, 2002**

**Chicago, IL**

On June 17-18, 2002, the International Program of Heartland Alliance will launch the new civil society network *Enlaces Regionales* with a meeting on Corn and Community in North and Central America. We selected the themes of Corn and Community because the issues surrounding corn are emblematic of the challenges for rural development region-wide. In the rush to modernize economies, many countries are turning away from the rural sector, removing traditional protections for local production. Corn production and consumption play central roles in rural traditions and livelihoods throughout the region, and an examination of this important symbol represents a good place to begin a dialogue about creating sustainable alternatives for the countryside in North and Central America.

The meeting will take place in Chicago, IL, and we are hopeful that corn producers and consumers, as well as migrant and human rights advocates, academics, policymakers, and representatives of the business sector will attend. If you are interested in participating, or have ideas about how to make the conference as meaningful an opportunity for inter-sectoral and cross-border exchange as possible, please get in touch with us via the contact information listed on p. 2.